

IN THE PRISON OF RICH BAD BOYS IN FRANCE



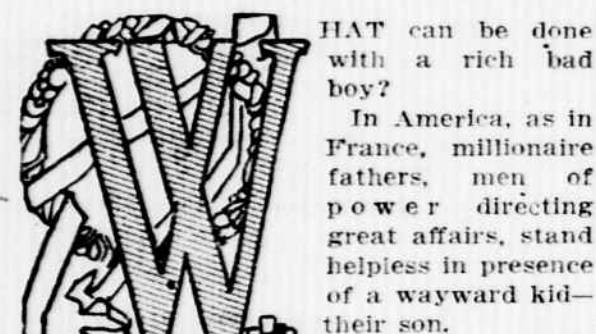
"IT'S FOR A LONG TIME, MY BOY!"

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY OUTDONE IN MODERN FRANCE—LETTERS DE CACHET AT THE DISPOSITION OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS WHO CAN PAY—THE PRICES OF THE "PATERNAL HOUSE" OF METTRAY—PATRONIZED BY SENATORS AND ACADEMICIANS—HOW TO MAKE THEM STUDY—ARE THERE AMERICANS OR ENGLISH IN THE KIDS' BASTILLE?

Special Correspondence of The Star.

TOURS, ON THE LOIRE.

(Garden of France), March 1, 1909.



What can be done with a rich bad boy? In America, as in France, millionaire fathers, men of power directing great affairs, stand helpless in presence of a wayward kid—their son.

Shall they put the bad rich boy into the tainted atmosphere of a house of correction? Impossible. Or into a very severe boarding school?

Years ago in France statesmen and judges set up a bad boys' boarding school, severe beyond all others. Though not spoken of in public, it grew famous in rich families. But as time passed abuses grew up, and the famous "Paternal

House" of Mettray developed into a kids' Bastille for venal guardians and cruel parents.

And yesterday a tragic scandal made the name of Mettray stink all over Europe.

It began with a troupe of English dancing girls in music halls. The girls were younger, prettier and more refined than usual, so that to the strange charm of the Anglo-Saxon maiden for any Frenchman they added an only half-spilled ingenuously that might easily stand for natural sympathy with a hobbledy of sixteen.

The troupe was at Marseille. In the case of one boy of family it became an idyl, afternoon carriage rides, teas and candy showered on seventeen-year-old Gracie. She knew that the boy was cutting classes, but not that he had sold his books and watch!

The boy surely deserved punishment; 3,000 lines of Virgil to copy and be kept in for a month. But no—this father doubtless knew his son better than you?—the punishment was six months for a starter in the solitary confinement cells

of Mettray, the prison of rich bad boys! Locked in his cell, 3 yards long by 2½ yards wide, the boy began by knocking loud, until the father came to say that if he kept it up he would be tied and thrown into a dark cell so situated that his knocking would trouble no one. So the kid became silent.

He became silent forever, because, in the morning, they found that he had hanged himself from the bars of his cell window.

Although this death disembarassed a honorable French family of a black sheep who would probably have wasted its money when he grew up, the management and directorate of the Paternal House were much annoyed when the story began getting into the Tours papers.

The scandal for the family! It would be difficult to call it a natural death. Of course, they would try; but no, it was too late. The parquet (public prosecutor's office also serving as coroner) of Tours found itself obliged to act. French Justice laid hands unexpectedly on letters, papers and witnesses proving that the "severe school" or "school of repression" founded by Demetz and Bretignieres de Couetelles had become a kids' bastille, where Nicholas Nickleby was being outdone daily in the persons of some fifty rich bad boys from all parts of France—and, it is said, America and England.

How could an American boy be yanked off on a lettre de cachet to solitary confinement in a French prison cell by a hard-hearted stepmother, guardian or parent?

Above the age of twenty-one we have had scions of great American houses locked up during years, even, in the gardens of Maisons de Sante on "administrative order," though admittedly in possession of their faculties; but it was regularly a concession to their money, permitting them to escape something worse. One can go too far in raising Cain, even in Paris. In the case of two sons of a famous New York millionaire they lived thus willingly confined for their own good, going out on weekly spurges accompanied by keepers and highly expensive.

But boys jailed without law process? French law provides for such lettres de cachet, but issued by a ward judge. When a father has "grave cause to be discontented with the conduct of a child" under sixteen, article 376 of the civil code allows the ward tribunal no discretion. It is bound, on the father's simple demand, to grant an order for the kid's "arrest and detention" for a period not exceeding one month.

Article 377 lengthens the imprisonment to six months when the son is above sixteen and under twenty-one, but the judge must confer with the public prosecutor before issuing the warrant, and together they may refuse it or shorten the period.

In any case, by article 378 there is never to be any writing or formalities. Mettray is a house of correction, not a prison. He is Alphonse Chardon, sixteen, who committed suicide in his cell at Mettray.

The articles of the code provide for putting boys in prisons, houses of detention or correction of the state for short periods (one to six months), answers the board of directors of Mettray. "They do not concern us."

And would you like to know how they prove it? Listen to the brilliant Senator Berenger, who, being on the board, is bound to defend the establishment, even though he may not have known what abuses tainted it.

"At Mettray it is not a question of repressing a rebellious boy," says the life senator, "but of employing a means of education. The boys pursue their studies at Mettray. Now, you cannot count on their reforming and preparing their baccalaureate examinations to enter the university in one month or six. Therefore the articles do not affect us."

"The warrant is necessary to send a rebellious child to a public prison, but Mettray is essentially private," continues M. Georges Picot, perpetual secretary of the Academy of Political and Moral Sciences, another director of the kids' Bastille. "I cannot see the necessity of a judge's order to arrest, as we have a free contract with the father, exercising his paternal power."

"The doors of the Paternal House, which in strict law, note well, we have the right to close against every one, have been opened to the judges of Tours," adds Prof. Berthelmy of the law faculty of Paris, third great man of this directorate. "It is true that the prisons inspection commission has been refused entrance. Evidently Mettray is not to be confounded with a common prison."

"It cannot be too often repeated that Mettray is a house of education and upbringing," concludes the fourth and most illustrious of this directorate of eight or nine—the remainder, being unknown to fame, were doubtless the really active ones. He is Alphonse Chardon, sixteen, who committed suicide in his cell at Mettray.

"Six professors prepare the students for the baccalaureate," explains Baron de Courcel, "Each student has a maximum of two hours' lessons per day. The professors, lodged and fed in a separate villa, are paid salaries of from \$10 to \$12 per month. They never know the names of their pupils, whom they must address by their numbers. Yes, the students of Mettray have taken their bachelors' degree."

As few boys pass their baccalaureate before nineteen years of age, this is a confession that young prisoners of Mettray have lived one, two or more years at a stretch in its solitary confinement cells.

But for the undoubted facts of the recent investigation by the magistrates of Tours the details would be difficult to believe. The rich bad boys' bastille has sixty cells—and sixty boys. Fifty of these cells measure three yards long by two and one-half yards wide; and they are lighted by a small barred window at a height of six feet above the floor.

"In order that the student may not be troubled by exterior sights,"

"In these cells the boys pass their time. The 'professors' come and give the kid his lesson in his cell."

And, to rub it in on the rich bad boy that he is in jail, the meals are fetched by house of correction kids in characteristic costume, jalled till their majority in the adjoining and far more famous penitentiary and agricultural colony of Mettray. These are 500 boys, acquitted as irresponsible "by lack of discernment," or as first offenders, of crimes that would otherwise send them to department prisons or central penitentiaries. They do not live in cells. They till the fields, learn trades, eat, sleep, run and play in bands!

"Lucky house of correction kids!" say the rich bad boys—who have never been before a judge!

Do you know what their recompenses for good conduct are—the rich, bad boys of Mettray? Listen to the confidential prospectus, difficult to obtain.

"The regime is so gentle so really paternal, that the administration has reserved six cells specially, called cells of recompense, affected to the most meritorious students. These cells are four yards long (instead of three) and three yards wide (instead of two and one-half); and the window is situated at the height of four and one-half feet above the floor (instead of six)."

"Boys like change," laughed one of the warders before the magistrates of Tours. "It takes so little to make them happy!"

Do they really spend all their time in solitary prison cell confinement, you will ask in horror.

All but two hours daily. This is the hygienic promenade. Each rich jailed boy must walk two hours daily through the romantic countryside of the Garden of France, the banks of the Loire, jeweled with the historic chateaux that a thousand American families visit yearly in hired automobiles, the fair land of old Touraine—Amboise, Loches, Chenonceaux, en route for Blois!

It is just possible that observant tourists quitting the ruined donjon of Sully-blancay or the Celtic dolmen of Mettray may have noticed, here and there, a single smartly dressed French boarding school boy, in characteristic blue broadcloth and brass buttons, doing a smart walk along the highway. He would be remarkable by reason of his solitary companion—a big jail warder!

"The rules exact that the students of Mettray be constrained to absolute silence during the two hours' walk, which a well understood hygienic accords them daily. Prison warders (from the adjoining penitentiary colony) only are capable of assuring that this rule be respected," runs the defense of Baron de Courcel and his fellow directors.

The ominous investigation is pending before the judges of Tours. It is possible that the illustrious senators, academicians and ex-ambassadors who allowed their names to stand on the directorate took it for granted that all must be well—and were ignorant of much that passed at Mettray.

Meanwhile, however, the scandalous revelations of the Tours and Paris dailies have inflamed the more sentimental section of the French public to indignation against the kids' bastille—and against the vindictive parents and, it is alleged, venal guardians who pay between \$500 and \$1,200 per year for each boy's jailing—and instruction.

That there are not over fifty such in France—including English and Americans, if any. A Paris weekly given to certain censors indignations the notorious Assiette au Beurre—insinuates, from certain clauses in the prospectus, that "as the code reserves to fathers only the right to a legal warrant of arrest, Mettray offers the enormous advantage of permitting guardians and step-parents to lock up and educate a boy with money."

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS.



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A CHANCE TO REPENT.

ELIHU ROOT, at a dinner in Albany, praised an Albany lawyer who had recently retired.

"He has retired very young," a doctor said. "It's a characteristic of your lawyers. Why do you all retire so young?"

"We want to avoid all risk," said Mr. Root, "of dying lawyers."

Ring Me Up, Little Girl. 2 pp—24 p.

No. 52.

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THE EVENING STAR'S WEEKLY SONG HIT

"Ring Me Up, Little Girl."

(Dedicated to TERESA M. HOFFMAN.)

Sung by JOHN PARK, of Richard Carle's great success, "Mary's Lamb."

Words by A. R. BALLINGER.

Music by STANLEY JADWIN.



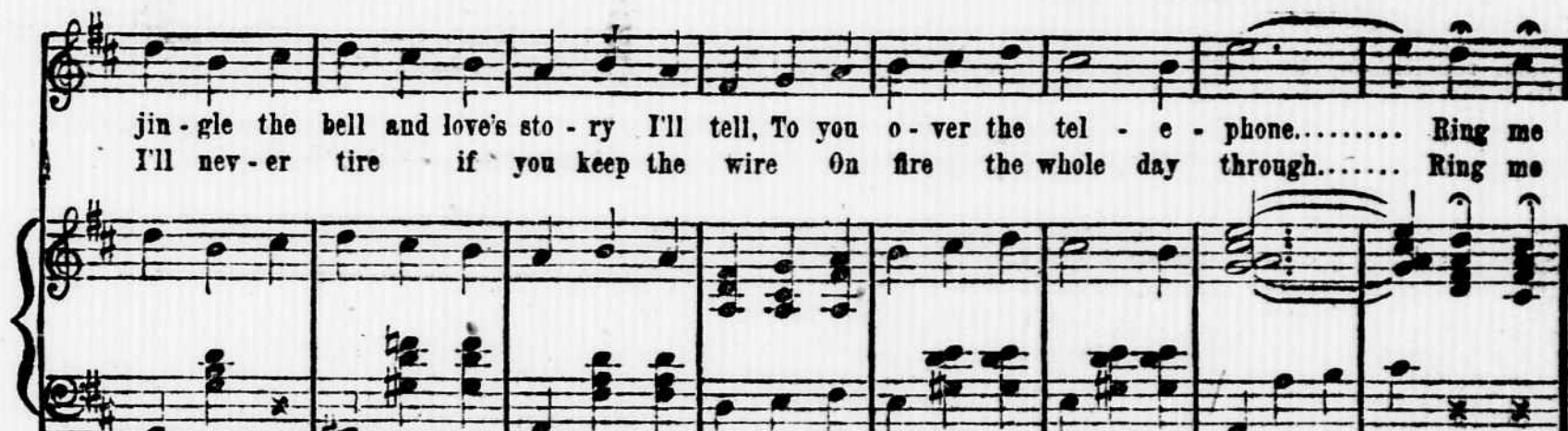
1. It hurts me to leave you but don't let that grieve you, For part-ings are noth-ing to - day,..... The
2. Don't let Cen-tral jol-ly or cut you off, Mol-ly. The line won't be bus-y to you,..... I'll



mall brings a let-ter but there's a way bet-ter With on-ly a nick-el to pay,..... When
welcome your voice, dear, 'twill make me re-joice, dear, No mat-ter what I have to do,..... You



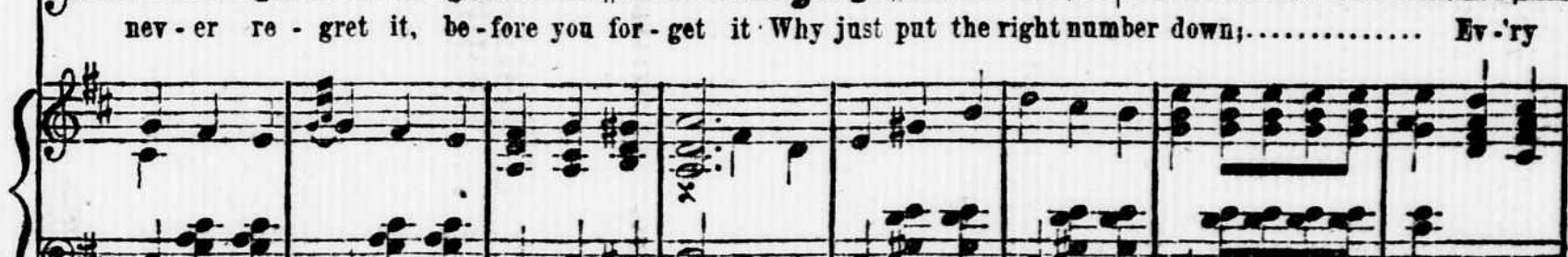
ev-er you're lone-ly and long for me on-ly, Just get in a booth all a-lone,..... And then
can't in-ter-fere with my bus-i-ness my dear, My busi-ness is just lov-ing you,..... And



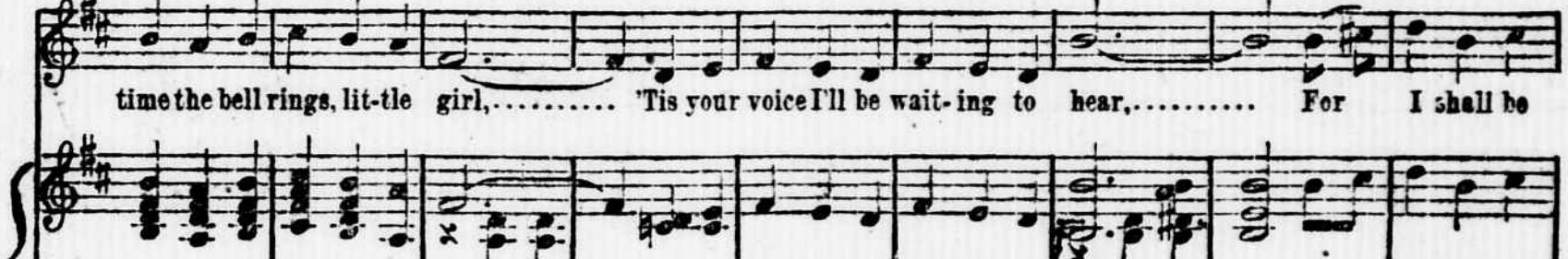
CHORUS.



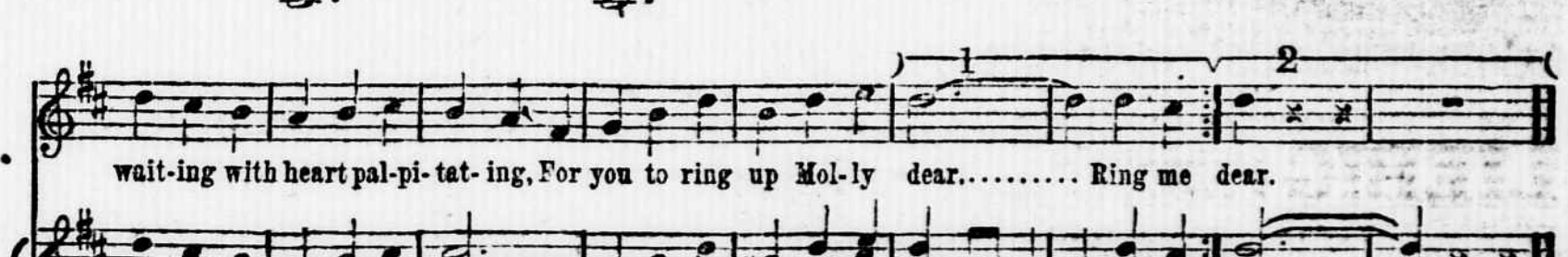
up, lit-tle girl, ring me up,..... Just as soon as you get in-to town,..... For you'll



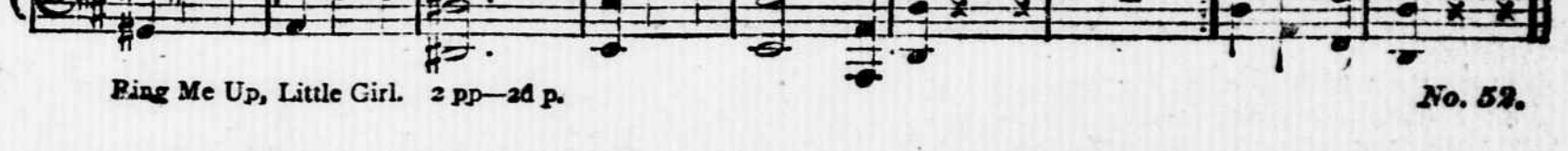
nev-er re-gret it, be-fore you for-get it Why just put the right number down,..... Ev-ry



time the bell rings, lit-tle girl,..... 'Tis your voice I'll be wait-ing to hear,..... For I shall be



wait-ing with heart pal-pi-tat-ing, For you to ring up Mol-ly dear,..... Ring me dear.



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